

TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF MASTERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AT UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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I. SUMMARY

This consent item recommends approval of a Masters of the Environment (MENV) degree at University of Colorado Boulder (UCB).

II. BACKGROUND

COMMISSION AUTHORITY

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review and approval of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129(6)(b), which states that new and modified program proposals shall be reviewed and approved only on the basis of fit with the institution's statutory role and mission.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

The following is summarized from UCB's proposal:

The proposed Masters of the Environment (MENV) degree is among the first of a cohesive set of professional masters degree programs at CU-Boulder that fit within the broad commitment to supply specialized, post-baccalaureate education to a growing market. MENV is an interdisciplinary, applications-focused professional degree program that meets the growing demand for analytically trained and skilled environmental professionals who can address complex problems encountered in both the private and public sectors. Through enhanced professional training, graduates of the program will re-enter the workforce with greater capacity to serve the needs of Colorado, the Intermountain West, and beyond. Our primary focus in developing the MENV professional degree is to respond to a significant demand for a diversity of rigorously trained environmental professionals in the private and public sectors.

Additional information on this proposed degree, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is in Appendix A.

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports UCB's statutory role and mission, which states:

The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall be a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall offer a comprehensive array of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado has exclusive authority to offer graduate programs in law. The Colorado commission on higher education, in consultation with the board of regents, shall designate those graduate level programs that are the primary responsibility of the Boulder campus of the university of Colorado. The university has the responsibility to provide on a statewide basis, utilizing when possible and appropriate the faculty and facilities of other educational institutions, those graduate level programs. The commission shall include in its funding recommendations a level of general fund support for these programs. [§23-20-101(1)(a), C.R.S.]

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that UCB's proposed Masters of the Environment degree is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The CU System Board of Regents approved the program at its February 20, 2015 meeting.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the Masters of the Environment degree at University of Colorado Boulder.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education:

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the

creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

APPENDIX:

Appendix A: Supplemental Information

APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

This supplemental information is unrelated to the proposed degree's fit with the institution's statutory role and mission. The following is summarized from the institution's proposal:

EVIDENCE OF NEED

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (US Department of Labor, 2014) employment of environmental scientists and specialists is expected to increase by 19% between 2010 and 2020. Employment of environmental scientists and specialists is projected to grow 15% from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average (11%) for all occupations. Some MENV participants may find employment in the planning field. With an expected job outlook of 10% for 2012-2022 (US Department of Labor 2014), urban and regional planners develop plans and programs for the use of land.

Surveys of environmental professionals in the metro-Denver area suggest a strong demand for a professional program. In the 2013 and 2014 applicant pool for ENVS graduate programs, 36% selected the internship option. Between 2004 and 2013, an average of 5.4 MS-internship students have graduated each year, compared to 2.5 per year for the thesis option. The internship option constituted 52% of all MS graduates in ENVS, compared to 24% for thesis option. These data suggest that there will be a large enough applicant pool to populate the professional masters program and we can be selective in our admissions. At roll-out, we project the first incoming class with 20 participants in Environmental Leadership specialization. As capacity builds and more specializations and tracks are added, the MENV program will grow; with full implementation target of 100 participants.

DUPLICATION

The MENV program at the University of Colorado will fill an important regional gap. Other universities across the country have established elite professional programs such as Masters of Environmental Management (e.g., Yale University, Duke University), which are mainly private and located in the eastern US. The programs at these institutions are national and even global in scope and program focus, but they do not specifically serve the Rocky Mountain region. They have much higher tuition costs, whereas the MENV program will have a lower price point that will attract a good mix of in-state and out-of-state applicants within the Rocky Mountain region.

Department staff notes Western State Colorado University offers a Masters of Environmental Management degree with the same CIP code.